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THE LATEST CEASEFIRE IN LEBANON

ANNCR: VOA NEWS ANALYST RONALD J. DUNLAVEY DISCUSSES THE LATEST CEASEFIRE IN LEBANON:

VOICE: ANYONE FAMILIAR WITH THE LONG RECORD OF BROKEN CEASEFIRES IN LEBANON CAN BE EXCUSED FOR REACTING CAUTIOUSLY TO THE NEWS THAT ANOTHER ONE HAS BEEN AGREED TO. AT THE SAME TIME, HE IS BOUND TO HOPE THAT THIS TIME THE CEASEFIRE WILL STICK.

THERE ARE, IN FACT, CERTAIN INDICATIONS THAT THIS CEASEFIRE HAS BETTER PROSPECTS THAN THOSE OF THE PAST. IT IS UNDERWRITTEN BY SYRIA, SUPPORTED BY LEBANESE MOSLEM AND PALESTINIAN LEADERS, AND APPARENTLY ACCEPTED BY AT LEAST SOME IMPORTANT CHRISTIANS, INCLUDING PRESIDENT SULEIMAN FRANJIEH. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT SOME SHOOTING IS STILL GOING ON, BUT THERE ARE ALSO REPORTS THAT THE CEASEFIRE IS TAKING HOLD.

THERE'S CAUSE FOR HOPE NOT ONLY BECAUSE THE CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT APPEARS TO HAVE WIDE BACKING, BUT ALSO BECAUSE IT REPORTEDLY DEALS WITH LEBANON'S FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM---THE APPORTIONMENT OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC POWER BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS. DETAILS OF THE AGREEMENT HAVE NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC, BUT UNCONFIRMED PRESS REPORTS SAY THAT IT CONTAINS PROVISIONS WHICH WOULD INCREASE MOSLEM PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT WHILE GUARANTEEING CHRISTIAN RIGHTS. IF THE CONTENDING FACTIONS CAN INDEED SETTLE THESE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES TO THE SATISFACTION OF ALL PARTIES, THE CEASEFIRE WILL HAVE INCREASED CHANCES OF BEING A PERMANENT ONE RATHER THAN JUST ANOTHER LULL IN THE FIGHTING. FURTHERMORE, POLITICAL ADJUSTMENTS ACCEPTABLE TO A BROAD SPECTRUM OF LEBANESE OPINION WOULD REDUCE

THE TWIN DANGERS OF PARTITION AND OUTSIDE INTERVENTION----
DESPERATE SOLUTIONS UNACCEPTABLE TO BOTH THE LEBANESE AND THEIR NEIGHBORS.

THERE IS ONE OTHER CAUSE FOR HOPE IN THE EVENTS OF RECENT DAYS IN LEBANON---AND THAT IS THE OBVIOUS DESIRE BY ALL PARTIES CONCERNED TO AVOID A CONFRONTATION WHICH COULD HAVE FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES. THIS DESIRE WAS EVIDENT MOST NOTABLY IN ISRAEL AND SYRIA---EITHER OF WHOM COULD HAVE MADE THE SITUATION MUCH WORSE BY A WRONG MOVE. IF THIS KIND OF SELF-CONTROL CONTRIBUTES TO A SETTLEMENT OF THE LEBANESE CRISIS IT COULD PROVIDE A USEFUL PRECEDENT FOR THE HANDLING OF FUTURE CRISES IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

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